

The Address—Mr. David MacDonald

at a certain age finds it hard to find another one before reaching retirement age which is now set at 65. Sixty years of age should be recognized as the age of entitlement to old age security pension and in all fairness, we should also consider paying that pension to the spouse as soon as either one reaches retirement age. I have already raised the question in this House. A motion to that effect standing in my name has appeared on the Order Paper and I expect to have the chance of dealing with it more fully during this session and make my point.

I would like to draw your attention to another matter. The problem of family housing should be solved immediately. We note that there is a decreasing number of available housing units and increasing the number of housing starts is considered but it is to be expected in the first instance that the builder will find it hard to obtain within a reasonable delay some of the construction materials and deliver his units without undue delay; otherwise he may have to bear heavier financing costs. The future home owners on the other hand will be faced with higher prices when buying their houses as well as ever increasing interest rates. A great number of Canadians and their families will find it impossible to buy houses and will have to go on living in premises belonging to other people.

The sales tax on all building materials should be removed immediately in order to lower the price of materials, and the government should set up a special fund designed to lend money to all buyers of single family units at very low interest rates, and grant mortgage interest deductions for income tax purposes and municipal and school tax exemptions to all owners of single family dwellings.

Some of my colleagues have already, and others will be doing so later, dealt with issues which the Social Credit Party of Canada would like to see discussed and with legislative action, that they wish to see adopted and we shall do everything in our power to move the government and the population toward a more realistic policy which would be better suited to the needs of Canadians.

[English]

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not at the outset comment briefly on the moving and the seconding of the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne which took place earlier in this debate by two of the newer government members of the House. One thing that struck me about their remarks was the degree with which they approached problems that we face in Canada on the basis of their relationship to the worldwide perspective. I think an interesting facet of the evolution of the parliamentary process in this country over the past 20 or 30 years is the increasing preoccupation of all members, past and present, with events that take place outside our borders.

I believe an appraisal was made not many years ago which showed that there were more questions asked about activities outside Canada than those within our borders. I do not know whether this reflects some kind of unnatural preoccupation with foreign affairs or just a frank realization that our country does not exist by itself, does not exist even within its totality, within its North American framework, but is very much a part of the whole international community. In saying that, I am not about to launch

[Mr. Laprise.]

into some well known thoughts on foreign affairs as I have had the opportunity to do in the past.

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I will focus my attention this evening on something that has from our beginning as a nation been a domestic preoccupation. It is interesting to note that I am making my comments following the introduction of the new national television program, first aired last night, "The National Dream", which is a re-creation of two books by Pierre Berton, "The National Dream" and "The Last Spike". These books chronicle the linking-up of Canada, particularly the area west of Ontario, by the railway and show how the railway made Canada one nation. It is ironic to think that when the railway was being built and when the vision of this country was turned westward, things were happening to this country in its eastern parts which were diminishing in importance and effectiveness the economic and social fabric of this newly constituted country.

For the past 100 years a succession of members of parliament and governments federal and provincial have wrestled with economic and social disparities within Canada. I want to bring the attention of members back to this problem this evening, first because it is still a major issue with which we must wrestle and, second, because I am disappointed with the Speech from the Throne. On this issue the government apparently has taken a "stand pat" approach.

The government says majestically, in the first paragraph of the Speech from the Throne, that it attaches great importance to regional development. Then it goes on to say that many of the measures to be introduced during the session were discussed at the western economic opportunities conference and will be of benefit to all areas of Canada. Then the speech refers briefly to transportation, mentioning it briefly as a key factor in regional development, and it talks about the necessity for developing a comprehensive port structure for Canada. Speaking as a member who represents a part of the country which has wrestled with the discrimination involved in our national transportation policy, I do not for one moment want to play down the importance of the transportation issue as an element in regional development policy.

One cannot be heartened by either the commitment or concern of the government in this regard, because as late as in today's question period, if my memory serves me correctly, a member asked when we are to get from the railroads accurate figures or accurate appraisals regarding freight rates to western Canada. That information was earnestly requested by the four western premiers recently and has not been made available, as I understand it, by the railways either to the Canadian Transport Commission or to the four western governments. If such action is any measure of responsibility with regard to the fundamental question of transportation, no amount of shuffling of amendments or high-flown talk in Speeches from the Throne will make much impact on the difficult issues to do with national transportation.

So far as port development is concerned, if we could hear the premier of Nova Scotia or the premier of New Brunswick speaking, they would tell us about the recurring difficulties they have experienced in coming to